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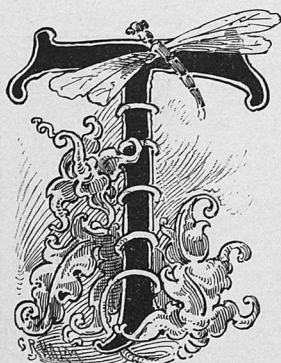
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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.



STUDIES FOR THE INTERIOR DECORATION OF CITY HOUSES.

THE DRAWING-ROOM.

BY RALPH A. CRAM.

THE custom which has hitherto prescribed for the decoration of the drawing-room, chiefly the styles of the Renaissance, is to a certain extent based on a more penetrating and admirable judgment than usually characterizes the

choice of motives made by architects of the present day, for the drawing-room, as it now exists, only came into existence finally with the self conscious attempt at an artistic and intellectual revival called the Renaissance. Indeed, it is not until the very culmination of this movement, when its early Italian purity had been lost forever, and it had passed to France and England and Germany, becoming vulgar classic,—that its outgrowth, the drawing-room, really took on its final and present aspect.

The drawing-room is essentially French in its origin; it belongs to the last days of the kingdom and the first of the Empire, and therefore in houses where polyglot decoration is rife, the Empire and Consulates and Louis Quinze and Sieze styles are particularly applicable. In a house where any attempt is made at logical decorations of course this thing cannot be: we are reduced to the expedient of attempting to find out the peculiarly appropriate qualities of the Renaissance style, and adopting these without copying their details, which belong unalienably to the age which saw their birth.

In the first place then what is the drawing-room? But, of course, here as everywhere, this depends wholly on the nature of the inmate. Perhaps he is bookish, thoughtful, intellectually inclined: then the room will be grave and quiet in decoration, perhaps, with dark colors, very certainly quite simple and with decoration calculated to show pictures and to create an impression of dignity and calm, the room thus usurping a part of the function of the library, which so becomes a more private and personal retreat. Or perhaps he is "a gentleman of leisure," with no idea of how to dispose of it. Then it will be gay and brilliant and crowded with detail to catch the eye and fire the mind. Or perhaps he is simply a rich man, when it will be what his architect happens to like, François Premiere or Jacobean, Colonial or Queen Anne. Yet, striking a general average, it is safe to say that in the generality of modern houses the drawing-room will vary little in its requirements. By itself and properly its nature is very clear. It is the room where business cares, official anxiety and mental labor are put away, where human beings meet in that useful and pleasant social intercourse, where the body rests—and the mind also. Grave considerations, heavy ideas, deep questions are forever foreign. The library, the study, the smoking room absorb these. Here one indulges in social contact—contact essentially, nothing of penetration, of deep reading; gaiety, triviality, superficiality, pleasure, these are the characteristics of a drawing-room.

Clearly, then, the taste which finds fit for drawing-room decoration the heavy styles of the English Renaissance, or the rude passion and genuine feeling of the medieval styles is something at fault; first, because solidity and solemnity are dampening to spirits and out of the question, and second, because these styles do not in the least, in their outer characteristics, tend to frame satisfactorily and to show up pleasantly the brilliant costumes and fair faces that in great measure give a drawing-room its chiefest beauties. To make a drawing-room Jacobean is false in both ways; to make it Gothic in the least is worse, for Gothic is—as it is now used, finally and utterly inapplicable to modern requirements and characteristics. Gothic as a style is forever dead, it can only remain a beautiful and wonderful memory. The world has become self conscious, superficial and critical; it can never go back to the strong and universal nobility and earnestness of the twelfth and thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. If there is nothing better for us to do than have to chose a style of the past for present work, why the Renaissance style is certainly the most appropriate in general idea.

This then is the general impression the drawing-room demands, its motive as it were; the second consideration is as to its outer qualities. Being a room for entertainment first of all, it needs must be delicate, intricate and elaborate in whatever carving and decoration it may possess, nothing rude or symbolical or of oppressive dignity should disturb its pleasant quality, the most perfect execution possible, the daintiest handiwork, the most subtle proportion, the fairest colors—these are all necessary

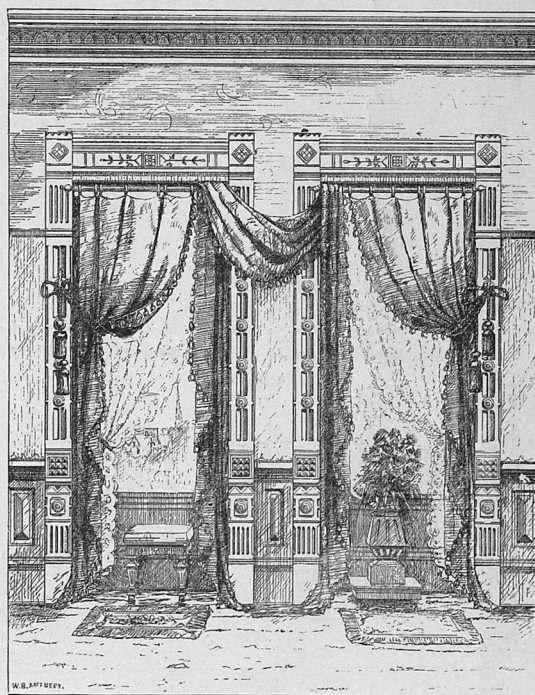
requirements. Each scrap of carving must be perfect and scholarly in design, entirely masterly in workmanship. Yet everything must be modest and unobtrusive, for the room is above all things a frame, a background, and it must be best studied to show off to advantage its inmates.

Being an evening room essentially, its colors must light up well, and cream white and gold are more allowable here than elsewhere. It is a public room, and therefore the interests of its guests are to be consulted rather than those of its owner, and so a degree of catholicity and universality, out of place elsewhere, is allowable here. Of course, above all things no confusion, still, bric-à-brac and curios belong here if anywhere. Again, it is not a room for lounging, and therefore easy chairs are scarcely needful. Comfortable, of course, but not for lazy ease. Rather should the furniture be light and graceful, modeled perhaps after that of Louis Seize. The drapery should be light, not thick and heavy, and the lighting should be soft and bright, candles being of course immeasurably the best.

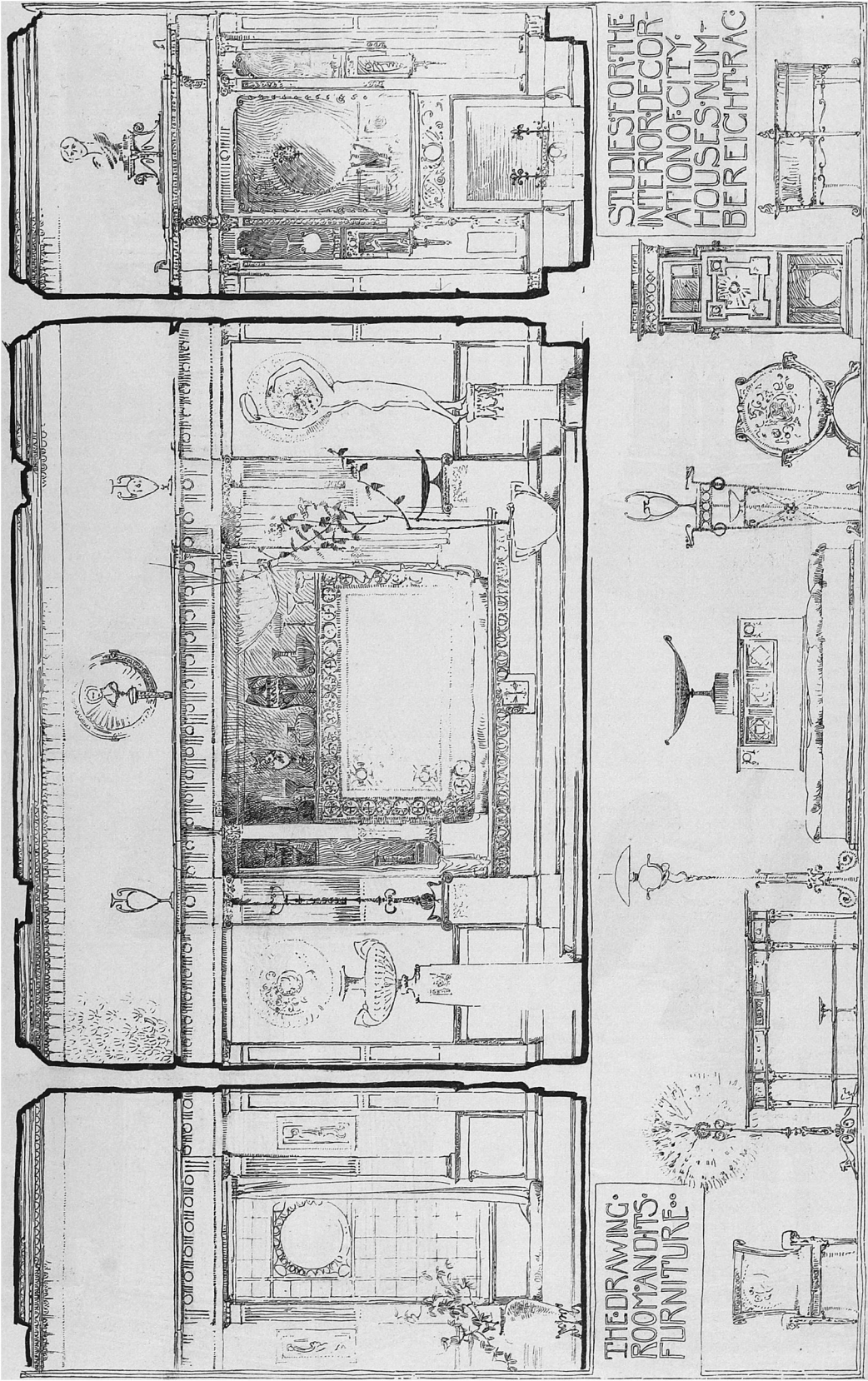
The exigencies of travel make a perspective drawing impossible, but the accompanying sketch may serve to give an idea. The central section shows one end of the room, the plan of which is a square, with two of its corners beveled, one of these sides containing the fireplace, the other the archway to the small octagonal cabinet. The large central hall, already illustrated, assumes much of the duty of the ordinary drawing-room, and this smaller room becomes rather the chief one of a series of smaller rooms for more private conversation and entertainment. The central figure is an alcove with a cushioned seat on a raised dais, a deeper alcove above furnishing a shelf for the arrangement of fine glass and porcelain. The color of the room is pale yellow and white, and this seat being covered with pale gold colored embroidery of varying shades and colors, concentrates all the colors in the room.

The woodwork throughout is old ivory in color, enamelled, the flutes and moldings being slightly picked out with gold. The panels of wall space are pale yellow velvet paper, and the stretch of frieze-like wall above is white, with gold stenciling. The ceiling is of similar panels of white and gold, framed in coffering of old ivory, wood and gold. In the centre of the room is a square pedestal, bearing a white vase, and surrounded by low seats with gold colored cushions. The floor is of low toned Sienna mosaic, covered with one large rug, brown and yellow, with the requisite peacock blue for accent. A screen of peacock feathers and one or two small jars or vases of the same hue complete the needful contrast. The windows are filled with amber glass and pale blue bulls eyes.

PAINT TO DRY IN HALF-AN-HOUR.—Mix the colors in gold size and spirits of turpentine; let each coat dry before the next is applied. Varnish over to give a gloss.



SUGGESTION FOR WINDOW DRAPERY, BY W. B. M'ENRY.



STUDIES FOR THE
INTERIOR DECOR-
ATION OF CITY
HOUSES. NUM-
BER EIGHT. TRAC

THE DRAWING-
ROOM AND ITS
FURNITURE

THE DRAWING-ROOM. BY RALPH A. GRAM. (For description, see opposite page).